

# Master Metals cools furnaces for 30 days

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PLAIN DEALER REPORTERS

## CLEVELAND

Master Metals Inc., a company with a long history of environmental violations, agreed yesterday to shut down its lead-smelting furnaces for 30 days.

The company said it would seek technical assistance from the state to correct violations of Cleveland air-quality standards at its furnaces in the Flats.

Master Metals began closing as it faced a deadline from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and a hearing in Cleveland Municipal Court. A new court hearing, if needed, will be Sept. 11.

The company and the city signed a consent decree just before a trial was to begin before Judge William H. Corrigan in Housing Court. The city had been seeking an injunction to shut the plant at 2850 W. 3rd St. in the Flats.

Because the city charged that the company is a public nuisance, the city's Housing Court, under Ohio law, had jurisdiction.

The gradual furnace shutdown that began yesterday morning should be completed by the end of today, said Anthony J. Garofoli, a lawyer representing Master Metals.

"We anticipate that all 50 employees will be on layoffs until the situation can be worked out with the Ohio EPA," he said.

William Gruber, chief assistant law director for Cleveland, said the city

has been trying to close the plant for two years. City officials believe emissions from the plant create a health threat to Cleveland citizens.

"We believe the company has a personnel problem, and possibly with more employees, some of the environmental violations would not occur," Gruber said.

Dust and other particles around the plant had been kept under control recently when employees watered them down, he said.

On Monday, the Ohio EPA ordered Master Metals to stop operations immediately because of "health-threatening" violations of air-quality standards.

"We are going to comply with the EPA order and work to do whatever possible to bring the plant into compliance," said Garofoli. "We want to open again as soon as we can so we can bring our workers back."

Garofoli said Master Metals has spent almost \$3 million in the past few years in an effort to clean up the environment around the plant. The company extracts lead from batteries and other materials through a smelting process and sells the lead.

Recent EPA reports say Master Metals has been emitting 2,300 times the national standard for lead air pollution.

Greta Fifner, a resident of Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood, near the plant, is worried that she may have a plot full of abnormal tomatoes.

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## Metals

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"We've been growing a garden this summer, and it's kinda scary that we have vegetables growing in this lead-laden air," she said.

Reaction to the lead emissions was mixed in Tremont. The Master Metals smelting operation next to LTV Steel is about a mile south of the neighborhood.

Laura Farrell is six months pregnant and worried about how the lead could affect her baby.

"When they are putting out 2,300 times the normal amount of lead into the air, I have to be concerned," Farrell said. "I live in this area and I breathe this air every day."

Farrell lives near W. 14th St. and Auburn Ave. She said the lead problems were news to her and that she wished something had been done sooner to correct the problem.

"It just goes to show that it has to be pretty darn bad to get something done," she said.

Cindy Hicks was pushing her 7-month-old son, Joshua, on a swing in her yard at Miller and W. 5th St. yesterday. She was worried about other children in the area who play at the bottom of the hill where Master Metals and LTV Steel run their plants.

"All these kids around here run around down there playing king of the mountain, and it's hard to tell if they go near those places," Hicks said.

But some in Tremont ignore the problem as long as they can't see it or smell it.

"It's downwind from me and it's out of sight and out of mind," said Bob Holcepl, owner of Cravings coffee shop at 2366 W. 11th St. "It no more affects me than it does in your office downtown."

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